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SUBJECT: DAILY SUMMARY OF JAPANESE PRESS 04//07

INDEX:

- (1) Poll on Abe cabinet, political parties, constitutional referendum legislation
- (2) Government, ruling camp eager to enact bills linked to Abe's policy imprint
- (3) Excerpt from Fuji TV Hodo 2001 program on April 15
- (4) LDP Policy Chief Nakagawa criticizes Minshuto
- (5) Kasumigaseki confidential: LDP Secretary General Nakagawa's natural enemy
- (6) Kisha no Me (Reporter's eye) column -- Premier Wen's signals to Japan
- (7) Researchers' disclosure of documents used in Tokyo War Crimes Trials showing coercion of comfort women
- (8) Facts about SDF deployment in Iraq (Section 2); Thinking of SDF as Japan's new garrison-SDF in transformation (Part 5): US military intelligence-ASDF as 'one flesh' with US forces in its airlift mission

ARTICLES:

- (1) Poll on Abe cabinet, political parties, constitutional referendum legislation

Questions & Answers

(Figures shown in percentage, rounded off. Bracketed figures denote proportions to all respondents. Parentheses denote the results of the last survey conducted March 31 and April 1.)

Q: Do you support the Abe cabinet?

Yes	40	(37)
No	38	(43)

Q: Why? (One reason only. Left column for those marking "yes" on previous question, and right for those saying "no.")

The prime minister is Mr. Abe	20 (8)	4 (2)
It's an LDP-led cabinet	24(10)	27(10)
From the aspect of policies	27(11)	55(21)
No particular reason	27(11)	11 (4)

Q: Which political party do you support now?

Liberal Democratic Party (LDP)	31	(30)
Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ or Minshuto)	14	(14)
New Komeito (NK)	4	(2)
Japanese Communist Party (JCP)	3	(2)
Social Democratic Party (SDP or Shaminto)	2	(1)
People's New Party (PNP or Kokumin Shinto)	0	(0)
New Party Nippon (NPN or Shinto Nippon)	0	(0)
Other political parties	0	(1)
None	41	(43)

TOKYO 00001708 002 OF 009

SUBJECT: DAILY SUMMARY OF JAPANESE PRESS 04//07

No answer (N/A) + don't know (D/K)	5	(7)
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Q: A national referendum bill, which prescribes procedures for the nation to vote on amendments to the Constitution of Japan, cleared the House of Representatives on April 13, and the bill was sent to the House of Councillors. Would you like this national referendum legislation to get through the Diet during its current session?

Yes	40
No	37

Q: According to the national referendum bill that passed the Diet's lower chamber, the Constitution will be amended with a majority of valid votes if the turnout of voters is low. Do you think the turnout of voters should be above a certain level to amend the Constitution?

Yes	79
No	11

Polling methodology: The survey was conducted April 14-15 over the telephone on a computer-aided random digit dialing (RDD) basis. Respondents were chosen from among the nation's voting population on a three-stage random-sampling basis. Valid answers were obtained from 1,807 persons (54%).

(2) Government, ruling camp eager to enact bills linked to Abe's policy imprint

YOMIURI (Page 4) (Abridged slightly)
April 18, 2007

The government and the ruling coalition have begun making serious efforts to enact key bills linked to Prime Minister Abe's priority agenda. The Lower House started discussing three education reform-related bills at its plenary session yesterday. They are planning to conduct Diet deliberations on other bills as well, including Social Insurance Agency (SIA) reform bills and an Iraq Reconstruction Law extension bill, starting later this week through next week. Behind the plan lies their intention to play up the Abe

administration's priority policies with an eye on the Upper House election this summer.

Liberal Democratic Party Secretary General Hidenao Nakagawa told party executives yesterday: "We are faced a large backlog of key bills. We need to deliberate on them, aiming for early Diet approval." An LDP Diet affairs executive took this view: "It will be difficult to get all the key bills enacted in the current session. We want to handle bills bearing an Abe stamp on a priority basis." The LDP specifically plans to aim at swift Diet approval of the three education bills, the SIA bills, and the Iraq-related bill, in addition to the national referendum and US force realignment bills that cleared the Lower House on April 13.

Initially, the LDP had a plan to discuss labor-related bills, including one to raise the minimum wage, ahead of the SIA-related bills. This has been reversed in accordance with the Prime Minister's Official Residence's (Kantei) desire to face the Upper House election after enacting the SIA legislation. As a result, the Diet may start discussing the social insurance legislation as early as tomorrow. This also stems from the LDP's intention to expose the relationship between the major opposition Minshuto (Democratic Party of Japan) and civil servant labor unions through the SIA reform.

TOKYO 00001708 003 OF 009

SUBJECT: DAILY SUMMARY OF JAPANESE PRESS 04//07

The government's and the LDP's aggressive attitude is partly ascribable to the Abe cabinet's rising public-support ratings. Nakagawa indicated yesterday: "Lower House approval of the national referendum legislation and an LDP-New Komeito agreement on reform of the civil servant system have helped pushed up support ratings for the cabinet." His view is that playing up the LDP's adversarial stance toward Minshuto and Abe's imprint helps the prime minister impress the public as strong leader.

Simultaneous discussions on multiple bills in the two chambers of the Diet in May and beyond might take a toll on deliberation time. For instance, chances are that the enactment of the US force realignment legislation will not occur until after the Golden Week holiday period in early May due to the Upper House Defense Committee's intensive deliberations on treaties. A further delay in the US force realignment legislation might affect discussions on the Iraq Reconstruction Law, as well.

Coordinating timetables for relevant Cabinet ministers will also be difficult. Opposition parties might ask for Chief Cabinet Secretary Yasuhisa Shiozaki's attendance at deliberations on many key bills. Some are apprehensive that the LDP's high-handed approach to the key bills will backfire on the party.

Many lawmakers were absent or walked out of the Lower House plenary session yesterday amid campaigning for the second round of nationwide local elections and the Upper House by-elections in Fukushima and Okinawa prefectures. According to the Lower House Secretariat, 52 lawmakers filed notifications of absence. Nearly a

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half of all the seats in the hall were empty when the three hours and 40 minutes of question-and-answer session ended.

At one point, Nobuto Hosaka of the Social Democratic Party asked Prime Minister Abe: "This looks like a classroom on the verge of a temporary closing. What do you think of this as a sponsor of the three important education-related bills?" In response, Abe said: "I would like to see Lower House (committees) discuss the matter."

On October 27, 2006, some 40 lawmakers did not show up in the Lower House plenary session. That prompted President Yohei Kono to tell all the parties to remind their members of the need to attend plenary sessions.

(3) Excerpt from Fuji TV Hodo 2001 program on April 15

SANKEI (Page 5) (Full)
April 16, 2007

The policy chiefs of the ruling and opposition parties discussed the achievements of a visit to Japan by Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao and the right of collective defense.

-- The Chinese government has suddenly changed to a friendly stance.

LDP Policy Research Council Chairman Shoichi Nakagawa: Prime Minister Wen appeared to have been satisfied with his Japan visit, but I'm not. It is not Japan, but China that should melt the ice on such disputes as exploration rights in the East China Sea gas fields and other issues.

Minshuto (Democratic Party of Japan) Policy Research Committee

TOKYO 00001708 004 OF 009

SUBJECT: DAILY SUMMARY OF JAPANESE PRESS 04//07

Acting Chairman Keiichiro Asao: We will see whether the bilateral relations become better or the two countries are just putting off pending issues.

New Komeito policy chief Tetsuo Saito: Chinese Premier Wen gave high marks to Japan's apologies for the war, as well as to Japan's official development assistance. Japan should take seriously the change in the Chinese government's position.

People's New Party Acting President Shizuka Kamei: I wonder if our just formally shouting out, welcome, welcome, is enough to better future bilateral relations between Japan and China. China needs to change its anti-Japan education.

-- Prime Minister Shinzo Abe plans to set up an experts panel to let it look into the right of collective self-defense.

Nakagawa: What the prime minister has called for is a debate within the scope of the present Constitution.

Saito: I agree to the idea of studying such, but amending the Constitution would be necessary if Japan is to exercise the right to collective defense.

(4) LDP Policy Chief Nakagawa criticizes Minshuto

SANKEI (Page 5) (Full)
April 16, 2007

Appearing on Fuji TV talk show on April 15, Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) Policy Research Council Chairman Shoichi Nakagawa criticized Minshuto's (Democratic Party of Japan) response to the national referendum bill, which had cleared the House of Representatives, noting, "The LDP and Minshuto had tried to settle the issue amicably, but they sought the interests of their party (at the final stage)." New Komeito policy chief Tetsuo Saito also pointed out: "Our cooperation did not work due to the top's decision. That is probable because the elections will take place soon."

Minshuto Policy Research Committee Acting Chairman Keiichiro Asao rebutted: "Since Minshuto submitted a modified bill before taking a vote, a debate on the bill should have been conducted." Appearing on a NHK talk show the same day, Minshuto Diet Committee Chairman Yoshiaki Takagi rapped the ruling coalition's response, saying, "We are very concerned about the huge ruling coalition continuing this kind of oppression with its superior numbers."

Referring to the idea of lowering the minimum voting age for national referendums to 18, Nakagawa said, "We will make efforts to set the minimum voting age at 18."

(5) Kasumigaseki confidential: LDP Secretary General Nakagawa's natural enemy

BUNGEI SHUNJU (Page 234) (Full)
May 2007

When Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) Secretary General Hidenao

Nakagawa said: "I can identify the name of the bureaucrat who is trumpeting that Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and I are at odds," it was widely agreed in the political district of Nagata-cho and the government office district of Kasumigaseki that the official in question was Assistant Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Atsuro Saka,

TOKYO 00001708 005 OF 009

SUBJECT: DAILY SUMMARY OF JAPANESE PRESS 04//07

who entered the former Finance Ministry in 1970.

Chief Cabinet Secretary Yasuhisa Shiozaki, who does not know what to do with a review of the tax revenues for road projects system, forced the work onto Saka. Saka has undertaken also the implementation of the Abe cabinet's economic policy in place of Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Junzo Matoba, who is incompetent.

Saka is also a natural enemy of former Economic and Fiscal Policy Minister Heizo Takenaka, with whom Nakagawa had cooperated. Saka, who hailed from the Finance Ministry, which places priority on fiscal reconstruction but not on economic growth, knows many politicians and has influence in other ministries. This is the reason why everybody imagined it was Saka upon hearing Nakagawa's remark.

Although Saka reportedly reminds one of former Finance Ministry bosses, including former Administrative Vice Minister Jiro Saito, he does not have such an image.

When Ryutaro Hashimoto assumed the finance minister post, Saka, who had served in financial and tax fields, was picked as Hashimoto's secretary because the two had both studied at Azabu High School. He

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then became a tax examiner in charge of the prime minister's office. When Hashimoto became prime minister, Saka was appointed again as his secretary.

After that Saka became deputy director general of the Budget Bureau replacing Koichi Hosokawa, who was named secretary to then Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi. However, Saka does not have much experience in working on the budget.

Saka was then picked director general of the Economic and Planning Agency's Secretariat. When the central government offices were reorganized, he became a director general of the Cabinet Office. In the cabinet of Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi, Saka was shunned by Takenaka and this seemed to put an end to his bureaucratic career, after he had served as director general for disaster management in the Cabinet Office.

Isao Iijima, policy secretary to former Prime Minister Koizumi, who wanted to prevent Takenaka's influence from growing, called Saka back into the Cabinet Office as assistant deputy chief cabinet secretary. Saka has distinguished bureaucratic ability and he is a

SIPDIS

person of action. He, however, does not belong to the Finance Ministry's mainstream faction. He does not place priority solely on fiscal reconstruction.

Nakagawa therefore disgraced himself by criticizing Saka. Nakagawa, who once gave the shivers to bureaucrats, has ended up damaging the prestige of his office as LDP secretary general.

(6) Kisha no Me (Reporter's eye) column -- Premier Wen's signals to Japan

MAINICHI (Page 6) (Abridged)
April 17, 2007

Kazuo Iida

Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao during his recent three-day visit to Japan continued signaling to the Japanese. The signal has a variety of meanings. Were we sensitive enough to catch them? It appears to

SUBJECT: DAILY SUMMARY OF JAPANESE PRESS 04//07

me that Wen left a couple of assignments to us Japanese.

One of the highlights of his Japan tour was his address to a plenary session of the Diet. I paid more attention to Wen's body language than the contents of his speech. When he appeared in the plenary hall, Wen raised his right hand high and nodded slightly, but he did not bow down until he left the hall, as I had expected.

In contrast, when then General Secretary Hu Yaobang delivered a speech in the Diet in November 1983, he made a deep bow before the speech. After returning home, however, Hu came under fire from members of the leadership for his deep bow with one official saying: "He degraded the dignity of the Chinese."

Wen witnessed a power struggle first hand in the Chinese leadership and saw key officials fall from the positions throughout his long service as chief of the General Office of the Communist Party of China's Central Committee, during which he served as secretary to three general secretaries: "Hu Yaobang, Zhao Ziyang, and Jiang Zemin.

Everybody portrays Wen as a "person of consideration." In order to be considerate, he needs to have an insight into others. I presume that Wen, behind his smile, should have considered what if "I bowed before the Japanese."

Until the end of this March, I was stationed in Beijing as a correspondent. Frankly speaking and based on my experience in Beijing, Wen's performances in Japan, such as wearing a baseball uniform and playing catch, and operating a rice mower were not at all like Wen, who is modest and reserved. Those performances were perhaps intended to project an image of his being friendly toward the Japanese.

The performances were easy to understand visually and had a good effect. But I think the true purpose of his visit to Japan or the buzzword for the Japanese to understand the Chinese were hidden in his deeds or words we tend to overlook.

One example was the scene of exchanges of views between Wen and students in Kyoto. When students asked Wen about regional social disparities in China, Wen turned serious and said: "My dream is to let all children attend schools."

A number of children in China are unable to receive compulsory education even now. Wen is well aware that education contributed to boosting Japan's post-war reconstruction. He presumably regards education as the foundation for the construction of a "well-balanced society," the goal for the Hu Jintao administration to achieve. China is portrayed as a "rising country," but its substance is still fragile. Wen should have wanted to tell the Japanese public that a different world exists only next door to Japan.

In April, after five years, I returned to Tokyo. I have realized that a number of Chinese are working at restaurants here in Japan, and that Chinese letters and simplified Chinese are used on information boards posted here and there in towns and railway stations. The Japanese people's image of China is not necessarily good, but whether we like China or not, "China" has become much closer to us in our daily lives.

China has continued reminding Japan of its "past history." Wen, too, appealed to the Japanese during his recent visit to Japan: "We

SUBJECT: DAILY SUMMARY OF JAPANESE PRESS 04//07

should learn 'lessons' from history and face up squarely to the future." Even after the change of government in China, the Chinese leadership basically takes the same position.

This, too, is breeding hatred in Japan toward China. I suggest both Japan and China should be modest enough to learn lessons from each

other, looking at "history" involving themselves. Even though the other side may be incompatible with our side and vice versa, a true understanding of the other side could help to remove misunderstandings and frictions.

Wen summed up his recent visit to Japan as a "success." But it was a small one. The leaders of the two countries are well aware of that. If every Japanese can figure out the message given by Wen, it will lead to the next big success.

(7) Researchers' disclosure of documents used in Tokyo War Crimes Trials showing coercion of comfort women

AKAHATA (Page 2) (Full)
April 18, 2007

Documents connected to the International Military Tribunal for the Far East have been uncovered that show the former Imperial Japanese Army (IJA) had coerced women in Japan's occupied territory to work as "wartime comfort women." The documents were released to the public by Hiroshi Hayashi, professor at Kanto Gakuin University, Yoshiaki Yoshimi, professor at Chuo University, and Rumiko Nishino, co-chairperson of the Violence Against Women in War-Network Japan (VAWW-NET Japan) at a press conference yesterday in the Foreign Correspondents Club of Japan.

The documents consist of seven items that include interrogatories and depositions provided by prosecutors from the Netherlands, France, and China. They were all used as evidence in the Tokyo Trial.

Hayashi last year found them from among the files in the possession of the University of Tokyo's Institute of Social Science.

According to a document presented by the Netherlands, a civilian employee of the Imperial Japanese Navy's intelligence office on Borneo Island testified that he beat local women with flat of his hand and forced them to strip and had three young women stand naked for one hour. Regarding the reason for their detention, that civilian employee said, "They were detained under an order for the purpose of making an excuse to put them in a brothel," naming a commander of a garrison by name.

The disclosed documents confirm that the former Japanese military forced local women in Indonesia's Java Island and Vietnam's Lang Son, and China's Guilin to work as comfort women. Some of the documents were covered by the media in 1997.

Hayashi noted that these documents "were evidence at the Tokyo War Crimes Trial, the results of which the Japanese government accepted by signing the San Francisco Peace Treaty. The Japanese government has to accept them."

Yoshimi criticized Prime Minister Abe's attitude of denying the Kono Statement that expressed "apologies and remorse" to victims. He said: "It's a matter of his sense of human rights. It is unacceptable to back away from the Kono Statement."

TOKYO 00001708 008 OF 009

SUBJECT: DAILY SUMMARY OF JAPANESE PRESS 04//07

(8) Facts about SDF deployment in Iraq (Section 2); Thinking of SDF as Japan's new garrison-SDF in transformation (Part 5): US military intelligence-ASDF as 'one flesh' with US forces in its airlift mission

TOKYO (Top play) (Full)
March 30, 2007

The US Central Command-headquartered in Florida-commands US military operations in the Iraq war. The US military shares information with its coalition partners, using a new system called Combined Enterprise Regional Information Exchange System or CENTRIX for short. Japan is also a subscriber to this new information sharing system via two CENTRIX terminals installed in Japan.

One of the two CENTRIX terminals in Japan is located on the Defense Ministry's underground floor where the Self-Defense Forces has its central command post. The other one is set up at the Air Self-Defense Force's Fuchu base for its air support command, which is the headquarters of an ASDF air transport squadron currently on Japan's Iraq assistance mission. Meanwhile, US Forces Japan (USFJ), which is under the US Pacific Command, has no CENTRIX terminals. In a way, the Defense Ministry and the SDF are closer to the Iraq war than USFJ.

CENTRIX is networked with its subscribers to circulate security information that is needed for the ASDF's airlift mission in Iraq.

It was in the spring of 2003 that the ASDF began to study scenarios for its Iraq deployment, according to an ASDF staff officer. "At that time," the ASDF officer said, "we had no idea where to base and what to do." This officer recalled: "We share information (with the US military) when we conduct training exercises for the defense of Japan, but all that information is about fictitious events. We were at a loss because we had no experience on the battlefield."

The United States' information sharing with Japan began after the Iraq Special Measures Law's enactment in July 2003. At first, the Pentagon and the US Central Command doled out some information as if to measure the degree of Japan's seriousness.

US intelligence is complicatedly combined with photography and imagery from reconnaissance satellites as well as from spydrones, radio monitoring, and spying activities. To share in that information, the ASDF has been quietly doing one thing in Japan.

On Feb. 21, an ASDF C-1 transport plane from the ASDF's Iruma base in Saitama Prefecture arrived at the US Yokota Air Base, where USFJ is headquartered. The C-1 was taxied and parked near a hangar at the Yokota base. Then, a female ASDF member came out of the C-1 transport. Apparently in a practiced manner, she received a list of airlift supplies from a US airman.

A US military truck soon came and stopped near the C-1. On the truck's bed were cardboard boxes wrapped in a net. The cargo was placed into the C-1's belly hold. One of their tags stated that they were bound for Okinawa.

In the meantime, the C-1's pilot and copilot went into a USAF facility. They were briefed there on the weather conditions of their destinations. The C-1 was on a flight mission from Yokota to the US Marine Corps' Iwakuni base in Yamaguchi Prefecture and the US Air

TOKYO 00001708 009 OF 009

SUBJECT: DAILY SUMMARY OF JAPANESE PRESS 04//07

Force's Kadena base in Okinawa Prefecture. The C-1 took off in less than an hour after its arrival. This is a usual scene that can be seen on every Wednesday.

The ASDF's airlift support for USFJ began in November 2001 after the Antiterror Special Measures Law's enactment. At first, the ASDF was also on outbound airlift missions heading for Guam, Singapore, and other overseas locations. In recent years, however, the ASDF has been serving a regular flight a week from Yokota to Iwakuni and Kadena.

The Defense Ministry says USFJ, supported by the ASDF, can use its transport planes for other operations. That day, however, five C-130 transports, which are larger than the C-1, were parked on an apron of the Yokota base.

The US Air Force's 374th Airlift Wing-to which the Yokota-based C-130 transports belong-covers the Asia-Pacific region. The Middle East is outside its coverage. The ASDF has been operating at home to meet USFJ's needs. Meanwhile, none of the Yokota-based aircrafts has been pulled away to Iraq.

"Our mission helps to solidify the relationship of mutual trust between Japan and the United States," says Maj. Masashi Ota, 39, who is a C-1 pilot. The ASDF's airlift service is a 'loyalty test' for the ASDF to show that the ASDF is one flesh with US forces. The

ASDF's activities in Japan interact with its Kuwait-based air transport squadron's Iraq-bound airlifts. This has created an environment for the US military to share information with the ASDF.

"Some people in the political world and the media are prone to become hasty," the abovementioned ASDF echelon officer noted, "so I would like them to be well aware of civilian control." This ASDF officer likened operating overseas while knowing nothing to running at full speed in the dark. "We're inexperienced." With this, the officer came out of himself. "We can't be down to earth in our activities until we become aware of our weakness," he added.

(This is the last of a five-part series. This series was written by Shigeru Handa, Local News Section, Tokyo Shimbun.)

SCHIEFFER